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individuals will qualify for. Thank you.

SENATOR CUDABACK: Thank you, Senator Thompson. I know it's a Monday morning. I'm sorry. It's not Monday morning. But it's a little buzzy at times in here, the first day back. Try to hold the conversations down. Senator Beutler, followed by Senators Landis, Hartnett, Kruse, Don Pederson, Senator Engel. Senator Beutler.

SENATOR BEUTLER: Senator Cudaback, members of the Legislature, I hope you will not favor the Pederson amendment. It is simply too low. If you look at what it does, as compared to the committee amendment, the committee amendment, depending on whether you have health insurance or do not, would provide, in the one case, over \$18,000 a year, and in other case, a little over \$19,000 a year, whereas with the Pederson amendment, you're dropping back to 15 and 16.5 in terms of the annual amount paid to a worker. To me, this is the most important part of the bill. And you know, as the demographics of the country change, it's going to become ever more important that our workforce is stabilized, that they're content, that they have enough money to stabilize their family lives. Because we're becoming older. We have many, many more elderly, and fewer and fewer workers. And already in Nebraska, as you know, we're having to import workers. So it seems to me extremely important that we pay attention to the lower end of the pay scale, especially, of course, but not exclusively, in this area of where we're giving economic incentives. We talked a little bit last time about the minimum wage standard being irrelevant to anything. It has been a completely...a political football at the federal level. It has not been yet recognized as something that should be rightfully geared towards a standard of avoiding poverty in America, of avoiding the necessity of people going onto government programs. Government programs have been enacted by you and I because we have determined that people should have these programs. If we make the judgment that people should have these programs, childcare, health insurance, children's health insurance, these types of things, if we really believe that people should have these things, why do we put up with an economic system that doesn't produce it for them in the first place? Why do we have all these government programs and all